



Healthwatch Kent - March 2017

Listen to ME

- Experiences of Eastern European
communities in Kent



Foreword from our Chief Executive

Kent is a large and diverse county. We have the very rich, and the very poor. Kent is also home to many different communities and cultures.

This rich landscape brings with it challenges for the health and social care system. Different cultures use and experience services in different ways.

At Healthwatch we wanted to explore how some of these communities feel about our health and social care services and to understand what was being done to ensure services were meeting their needs.

In 2014, we spent many months talking with people from Eastern European communities in Thanet. We heard stories about struggles to get appointments and a huge range of issues around interpreting services.

We shared all our findings with both NHS England who at the time was commissioning GP services, as well as Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group who is now responsible for commissioning our GP services as well as the hospital services.

We made a number of recommendations to help improve services.

Since then we have continued to visit Thanet's Eastern European communities and we continue to hear of their struggles to get access to the right services. This new report brings all of our learnings up-to-date and we hope will reignite the need to ensure health and social care services work for everyone.

If you have any questions about our report or you would like to share your own experience, do please contact us anytime for free on 0808 801 0102 or email info@healthwatchkent.co.uk. We have a translation service should you need it.

Steve Inett

Chief Executive, Healthwatch Kent



Executive Summary


Our Aim

We wanted to speak directly to people who had an Eastern European background and were now living in Thanet. We wanted to understand how they experienced health and social care services in Thanet.

What did we find?




Access to health and social care remains inconsistent for Eastern European communities in Thanet



Many people found registering, getting appointments and communicating their concerns difficult



We continue to hear regular stories of family members, often children, acting as interpreters



Some patients are more likely to attend A&E because they cannot get access to a GP or can't get an interpreter



Our recommendations



- 1) Practices should clarify whether patients need a translator and encourage more patients to use the free translation services
- 2) Staff must be given practical training such as myth busters about migration and how to work with interpreters
- 3) Communication aids should be provided for reception staff
- 4) Translated materials which are culturally appropriate for patients on a wide range of topics should be available in GP surgeries and community venues
- 5) Appointment times should be extended when interpreters are needed
- 6) Services need to build relationships with their communities to build trust and overcome entrenched issues
- 7) Providers and commissioners should proactively engage with communities to ensure they have a constructive two way relationship and hear directly from the Eastern European community
- 8) We have shared everything that we've heard with the organisation which commissions GP practices in Thanet. We will be working with them on our recommendations and will publish an update about our progress in 6 months time




How did we go about it


- We spoke face to face with 46 people from Eastern European communities in Thanet, mainly Margate
- We visited community groups including a Family Liaison Group.
- We also organised a focus group and interviewed community members.
- Many people came on board our Big Red Bus Tour when we were in Margate to share their experiences too.
- We met with Practice Managers from Thanet GP surgeries to hear about the issues they face
- We met with Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group to understand about the interpreter services that they commission




What did we hear...

 A man had taken his mother to the GP with kidney problems, using the son as the interpreter, the doctor told the woman, "You're faking it."

 An Eastern European patient called for an emergency appointment for her baby and was told that none were available. 10 minutes later her English husband rang and was given an emergency appointment.

 A woman told us that she had to take her son with her to interpret but she was then unable to discuss some her gynaecological issues through her son.

 Many people found appointment booking systems difficult, some had tried going into the practice or asking a friend to make an appointment for them.

 We heard about a weekly drop in clinic at one GP surgery which was very popular and patients were able to see an interpreter. We're told this closed unexpectedly with many residents telling us they missed the service.

 Visited Practice Managers and Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group to raise the issues we heard and learn about the challenges they face

None of the people at our focus group had been offered an interpreter for a GP appointment.

People talked to us consistently about feeling like they were mis-understood or dismissed by their GP. They didn't feel listened to or respected.





What did professionals tell us...

Practice Managers for GP surgeries alongside commissioners told us the following:

- Everyone is entitled to an Interpreter if they need it
- Every Thanet GP practice has a free translation service
- Most patients tell GPs that they will bring their own interpreter
- Interpreters can be found within 15 minutes for most common languages





Response from Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group

NHS Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) plans and pays for the majority of health services in Thanet. We serve a population of 140,700 (2016) people via 14 GP practices and work closely with our partners in the NHS, local authorities and the voluntary and community sector to support local people.

Our GP members and staff know that Thanet has many positives, but we recognise people have a variable experience of health and care including difficulties accessing some services. There are significant challenges across Thanet in terms of health inequality and life expectancy, and some of the vulnerable groups within our communities are not as engaged with health and care as we would like. We are keen to work with Healthwatch and other partners in the area to tackle these issues, improving the health and wellbeing of our local communities and the quality of care we provide. That is why we proposed Healthwatch undertake the original research about access to health and social care services by eastern European migrants in Thanet and their experiences of those services. We are keen to work with Healthwatch and other partners in the area to tackle these issues, improving the health and wellbeing of our local communities and the quality of care we provide.

Both Healthwatch and Thanet CCG are part of the Thanet Health and Wellbeing Board and one of our agreed priorities is working with local partners to address inequality.

We want to make sure everyone knows of the translation services provided by Big Word, one of our commissioned services, and we would welcome support from Healthwatch in promoting this by including it within your report.

Big Word provides translation services both face to face and over the phone in 180 languages including British Sign Language. All GP practices use this service and promote it within their surgeries through posters, leaflets and their staff.

Between March and July 2017 Big Word was used 294 times by practices across Kent and Medway, one in five of those were for patients in Thanet practices using a variety of languages including: Urdu, Polish, Romanian, Czech, Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian, Slovak, Albanian, Bengali, Tamil and Bulgarian.

Some practices, recognising the diversity of the communities that they serve, provide specific clinical practice sessions with interpreters to support people. This includes The Limes Medical Centre, which runs smoking cessation,



Response from Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group Continued

services in Czech and Slovak. We welcome the positive stance from Healthwatch and other community organisations to assist us in making a difference for the communities we serve.

Thanet faces considerable pressures across health and social care, so the CCG is working with their partner agencies, GP members and staff to find local solutions including new ways of working across practices. Practices are grouping together to work more closely to facilitate these new ways of working, offering greater access through telephone triage, and clinical support to increase same day appointments.

The GP Five Year forward view describes the need for GPs to work together, to create new roles that can deliver care on behalf of GPs. This includes patients being seen by a wider range of professionals including paramedics and nurse practitioners, an increased focus by GPs on supporting frail and vulnerable patients and extending the hours when GP practices are available.

Thanet has been successful in securing national funding to support the digital (IT) and estates infrastructures required to support GP practices and further develop the new model of care.

Bringing together services and organisations, enabling them to work closely together, share resources, create a single patient record, act on behalf of each other and use the right skills at the right time.

Thanet is one of fifteen national rapid sites using the Primary Care Home model. We intend this to improve the calibre of care offered to local communities and will work hard with our partners in care to look at the best ways to communicate with migrant communities and overcome any barriers they have to accessing services as raised in your report.



Healthwatch Kent

Healthwatch Kent is the independent voice for local people in Kent.

We gather and represent people's views about any health and social care service in Kent.

Our role is to understand what matters most to people and to use that information to influence providers and commissioners to change the way services are designed and developed.

Our FREE Information and Signposting service can help you navigate Kent's complicated health and social care system to ensure you can find and access the services that are available for you. Call us on 0808 801 0102 or email info@healthwatchkent.co.uk



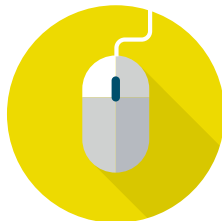
By Telephone:

Healthwatch Kent
Freephone 0808 801 01 02



By Email:

Info@healthwatchkent.co.uk



Online:

www.healthwatchkent.co.uk

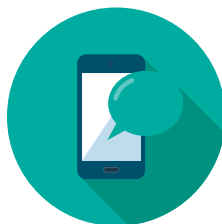


By Post: Write to us or fill in and send a Speak out form. **Freepost RTLG-UBZB-JUZA**
Healthwatch Kent, Seabrooke House,
Church Rd, Ashford TN23 1RD



Face to Face:

Call 0808 801 01 02 to arrange a visit



By Text:

Text us on **07525 861 639**.
By texting 'NEED BSL', Healthwatch's British Sign Language interpreter will make contact and arrange a time to meet face to face.